# Letter from Taizé

## Living the Council of Youth

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Quarterly Letter N° 28 November 1976

There is a Life, hidden in man, which rouses his hope. It opens before him the way of a becoming, for himself personally and for mankind collectively. Are you going to apply your attention to it ? Without that hope, anchored at your heart's very heart, without that becoming stretched beyond you, forging ahead ceases to appeal.

Not a hope composed by the mere projection of your own desires, but the hope which stimulates you to live what seemed to lie beyond all hope, in situations even with no apparent outcome.

Alone before Christ you will dare wait for the evolutions of history, even at their most ineluctable, to break wide open. This hope engenders surging creativity which overturns the determinisms of injustice, of hatred and oppression.

Alone before him, hope given by that Other. It reinvents the world.

Brother Roger

These are the opening words of the new book by Brother Roger, VIVRE L'INESPÉRÉ.
(English translation in preparation.)

# Waiting for the "second letter to the People of God"...

*Brother Roger and the intercontinental team at Calcutta*

By the time you receive this letter, Brother Roger and the young people accompanying him, coming from every continent, will be at Calcutta. Living in one of the poorest sections of the city, they are composing the "second letter to the People of God". They come from Zaire, Argentina, the United States, Great Britain, Spain, and of course from several Asian countries.

In communion with them, a large number of small meetings, evenings, weekends, are going on in many different places in a number of countries. Visits are being exchanged. In Britain and Ireland, over fifty different groups have been meeting together each week for prayer and reflection along the lines indicated in the prayer of Brother Roger and Mother Teresa. In England, a central concern has been that of moving toward a communion with the various immigrant groups in the country.

The preceding *Letter from Taizé* proposed some themes for these gatherings. This letter provides a tentative format for a time of prayer together (see pages 7 to 10).

The departure for the journey to Calcutta took place in Germany, with two successive meetings at Tübingen and Münster. Shortly before this, a youth from India who after spending a year at Taizé, returned to his country and went to work in an especially poor region wrote to Brother Roger :

« My involvement here is making very good progress. My contacts with ıe people are growing into a big family relationship. During the weekdays am with the miners, with them and their families, playing with their children. try to make them see their experiences in a clearer light. I teach English to group of unemployed men, as a way of entering their lives. During the veekend a friend comes and we go into the villages, walking for miles as ıe villages are spread out and in deep jungle. These villages have retained nd are living certain values that we all have lost. But the pains of industrial-sation are slowly entering these villages, too.

Your visit to Germany is coming ; here in India my life is still nourished y the experiences of all the Germans and other young people I met at Taizé. Vhen you are in Germany make it clear to the people that each one has a efinite role to play. Unless we search together the Gospel message and are repared to give up what is stagnating, we are fooling ourselves. To those vorking against poverty and international injustice, tell them that we in ıe Third World consider their efforts as an encouragement in what we are ving here. Today when international institutions are playing with the problems, ıe efforts of these groups of young people are real signs of hope.

I have a few letters from young Europeans telling me that they find the aschal commitment' too demanding. I feel that the 'paschal commitment' s not asking us to accomplish herculean tasks, but to open our eyes and uestion what is around us. For me this commitment is asking me to do what always loved to do. »

*ecember 5th at Notre-Dame, Paris*

The "second letter to the People of God" will be read or the first time at the cathedral of Notre-Dame in Paris, Sunday, December 5 at 4 PM, when Brother Roger and ome of the young people return.

Those coming to Paris from elsewhere and needing a place to sleep can rite to Taizé, and as soon as possible they will receive a reply from some-ne in Paris who is organizing the lodging.

To prepare the Sunday afternoon prayer at Notre-Dame, a preliminary ong-practice will be held Saturday, December 4 at 2 PM in the right transept f Notre-Dame. It would be good if those who can attend, especially those vho can bring their musical instruments, would write to Taizé beforehand. second get-together is set for Sunday, December 5 at 2 PM, at Notre-Dame, or all who wish to learn the songs or to help with the welcome.

*The LETTER FROM TAIZÉ to be published each month*

The *Letter from Taizé* you are presently reading is the last of a series of twenty-eight quarterly issues.

After seven years of existence, the *Letter from Taizé* is becoming a monthly. Its format will change and it will become a better instrument for transmitting news. Some important practical information regarding the change is given on page 11.

The next *Letter from Taizé* will be dated January 1977. A large part of its content will be made up of the text of the "second letter to the People of God", newly arrived from Calcutta. Copies will be rapidly printed in order to be taken to Paris for distribution at Notre-Dame.

A month later, the February issue of the *Letter from Taizé* will contain an account of the journey to Calcutta.

*After Notre-Dame, Paris, other meetings...*

The "second letter to the People of God" will show us the direction which the Council of Youth is taking. But already further meetings are in preparation.

At Taizé, there will be the Christmas and Epiphany meetings. Heated quarters will make it possible to offer hospitality even to those fearful of cold weather.

In Spain, a series of weekends is in preparation in different parts of the country for January and February. It will culminate in a meeting in Madrid to be held March 19-20. Those taking part will be lodged in different sections of the city. Brother Roger will be present for a prayer in the "Espiritu Santo" church (Ricardo Hortiz 1, Madrid 17).

And then, Easter at Taizé will be an important moment for many...

*Council celebration at Lubumbashi (Zaire)*

Two years have passed between the "first letter to the People of God", read at the opening of the Council of Youth, and the "second letter to the People of God", to be read this December fifth. Among other thngs, these two years have seen a succession of Council of Youth "celebrations" : in Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, the United States, Canada, Cameroon, Zaire, Bangla Desh...

Several issues of the journal *Communion*, also published in English, have reported on many of these events. Issue number 13, which appear shortly, is devoted to Africa, that fertile land, still recently mission territory, which today has found its voice. As we follow in the footsteps of the young people who crisscrossed the African continent, and listen to those who came together for Council of Youth meetings, reading this issue we discover a Church in the process of finding out who she is, a Church well on the way to reflecting something of the Gospel in its springtime freshness.

The following article is taken from this issue of *Communion*. It was written by some of the young people who took part in the final celebration in Africa, at Lubumbashi, in the southern part of Zaire, from April 30 to May 2 :

*For the past four years, meetings have been taking place each summer in a monastery in the city, to share our attempts to deepen our commitments. Small teams were formed. Study groups came together to deal with different subjects : catechism, social action, cultural animation, liturgical animation...*

*During the month preceding the celebration, a series of small meetings enabled many to discover what others were doing in their town or village. They provided an*

*occasion for prayer and discussion in the middle of neighborhoods, in parishes, in a prison with young inmates, in a community of young workers. They served as a meeting-place for youth and adults, couples, city and country dwellers, and an occasion for each one to reflect on their attitude regarding corruption, one of the country's most urgent concerns.*

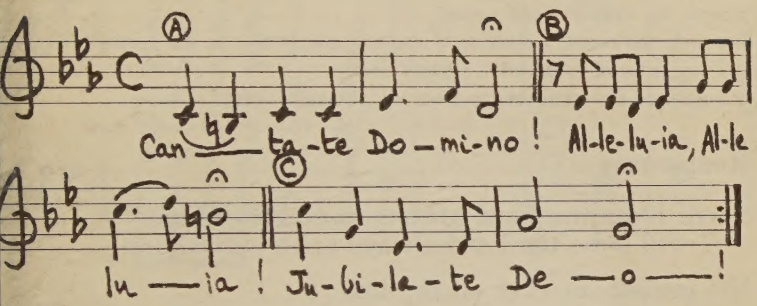
*At the end of this series of meetings we all came to Lubumbashi for three days of celebration. In the small discussion-groups, or during the four times of prayer each day, or during the daily hour of silence, the diversity of the participants was visible : catholics and protestants, workers, students, the unemployed, youth from Lubumbashi, Shaba (the neighboring region), Kinshasa, Cameroon, Europe.*

*Communion, sufferings, and signs of hope were the three themes symbolizing the three day-long progression. Readings of Bible texts in dialogue form, songs in Kiswahili, and individual presentations developed these themes. A different symbol characterized each prayer. Friday, a representative of each group brought a piece of wood, placing it in a small brazier in which a fire was kindled : our commitments throughout the earth are like a brushfire ; they spread out as a sign of joy and hope for others. Saturday, as an expression of human suffering, we planted two tiny shoots from a mango-tree in a pot of soil the seed must die in order to be reborn and produce a beautiful plant ; that is the way it is with us as well, as we encounter difficulties, setbacks, and sufferings. Sunday morning, a long march led us to a home for youngsters where those without work can learn a trade. Many people belonging to different parish communities joined with us that day. In a message read during the Eucharist, the archbishop of Lubumbashi asked all the participants to be consequent with their faith, and to commit themselves fully on account of Christ and the Gospel.*

(continued on p. 12)

## PRAYER OF PRAISE

**Cantate Domino** (Canon)




### Psalm 84

Lord, you are returning to revive us,
and your People rejoices in you ;
Lord, let us see your love,
and grant us your salvation.

I am listening ; what does God say ?
The word from God is peace,
peace for his People and his friends,
all who return in sincerity.

Truth and love have met,
justice and peace have kissed ;
truth shall spring from the earth,
and justice look down from the heavens.

God himself gives us his joy
and our land yields its fruit ;
justice will walk before him,
peace comes in his footsteps.

## Old Testament Reading

Two things I ask, do not withhold them from me before I die :
Put fraud and lying far from me ;
give me neither poverty nor wealth,
provide me with the food I need.
If I have too much, I shall deny you and say, "Who is the Lord ?"
If I am reduced to poverty, I might steal
and blacken the name of my God. (Proverbs 30)

## Responses

I will bless the Lord always and everywhere.
— I will bless the Lord always and everywhere.

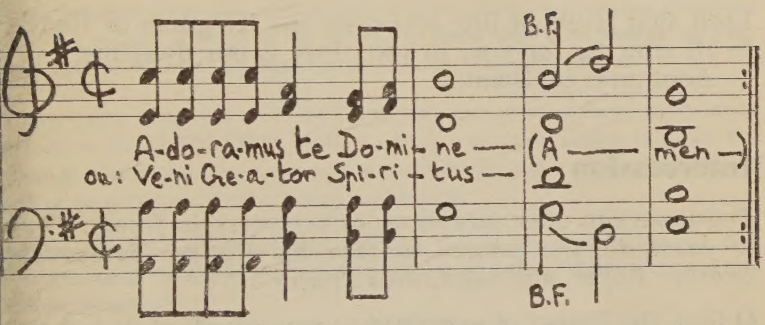
His praises for ever on my lips.
— Always and everywhere !

Glory to the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit.
— I will bless the Lord always and everywhere.

## New Testament Reading

Elizabeth said to Mary, "How happy is she who has had faith that the Lord's promise would be fulfilled !" And Mary said : "Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord, rejoice, rejoice, my spirit, in God my saviour ; so tenderly has he looked upon his servant, humble as she is. For, from this day forth, all generations will count me blessed, so wonderfully has he dealt with me the Lord, the Mighty One. His name is Holy ; his mercy sure from generation to generation toward those who fear him ; the deeds his own right arm has done disclose his might : the arrogant of heart and mind he has put to rout; he has brought down monarchs from their thrones, but the humble have been lifted high. The hungry he has satisfied with good things, the rich sent empty away. He has ranged himself at the side of Israel his servant ; firm in his promise to our forefathers, he has not forgotten to show mercy to Abraham and his children's children, for ever." (Luke 1)

## Silence




*while the last chord is sustained in a quiet humming, the following text is read or sung :*

O Christ, Lord become poor, you offer the poor of the world the Kingdom of Heaven, your riches fulfill us.
— Adoramus te, Domine.

Lord, meek and lowly of heart, to all who surrender themselves you open a world made new, your fullness is given us.
— Adoramus te, Domine.

Lord, prostrate in the garden of agony, you open in sadness a way of consolation, you are joy that none can steal.
— Adoramus te, Domine.

Lord, shedding your blood, you offer the cup of life to the peoples parched for justice, you quench every thirst.
— Adoramus te, Domine.

Lord, risen and revealed to the disciples, you take the heart of stone away, face to face we shall see you.
— Adoramus te, Domine.

Lord, humbling all power, you clothe with festival the makers of peace, your image transforms us.
— Adoramus te, Domine.

Lord, first fruits of life, you open the Kingdom of Heaven to all who die for you, in your love is our dwelling.
— Adoramus te, Domine.

## Intercession

*Everyone can offer intentions of intercession freely. Then, to conclude, the prayer written by Mother Teresa and Brother Roger, and the Lord's Prayer :*

O God, the Father of everybody : you ask all of us to bring love where the poor are humiliated, joy where the Church is downcast and reconciliation where people are divided — the father with his son, the mother with her daughter, the husband with his wife, the believer with whoever cannot believe, the christian with his unwanted fellow christian. You open this way for us, so that the wounded body of Jesus Christ, your Church, be leaven of communion for the poor of the earth, and in the whole human family.

Our Father ...

## **Cantate Domino** (Canon)

Praise in All our Days *(Faith Press, England) gives the daily prayer used at Taizé in modern English. North American publication by the Oxford University Press (New York) is announced.*

*For the canon "Cantate Domino", an accompaniment for guitar, flute, etc. can be found in a booklet soon to be published by Les Presses de Taizé :* JUBILATE DEO, 12 canons for voice and instruments, *by J. Berthier.*

# IMPORTANT NOTICE

Beginning in January, the LETTER FROM TAIZÉ will be sent out each month. A yearly subscription will cost £ 3 (UK) — $ 5.00 (USA) — 25 crowns (Sweden), including air-mail postage to all countries. Those who have already paid for next year at the old rate have simply to send the difference.

A supporting subscription will permit the creation of a solidarity fund, which will allow the LETTER FROM TAIZÉ to be sent to those unable to afford the price of a subscription. A supporting subscription costs £ 5 or 10 (UK) — $ 10 or 20 (USA) — 50 or 100 crowns (Sweden).

So that the changeover can take place as rapidly as possible, we ask that *everyone* send the subscription form on this page without delay to one of the addresses below.

Name :

First Name :

Address :

(postal code) (town)

Country :

subscribes ☐ re-subscribes ☐ for one year.
Wishes to benefit from the solidarity fund ☐
I am sending the sum of ..... to :
*It will help if you enclose the most recent envelope.*

*For UK* : "Letter from Taizé", c/o 23 Christie St., Dunfermline, Fife ;
*For USA* : "Letter from Taizé", 2150 Almaden Rd. 114, San José, Ca. 95125, *or*
"Letter from Taizé", 71460 Taizé-Community, France.

*At the end of the celebration, some of us drew up a message applying to our own situation the "letter to the People of God" which had been written for the opening of the Council of Youth. It called on all of us to be "people of communion, of justice, of contemplation" and proposed concrete commitments to us all, in such areas as prayer, justice, life-choice, and the struggle against corruption. In closing, the message said : "In the face of the current state of affairs, what is the good will of a handful of youths ? What are five loaves and two fishes to feed five thousand people ? Christ asks us to give all and to risk all, like the seed which goes to its death in the earth in order to bear fruit, like the merchant who sells all he has in order to buy the pearl of great price, like Peter who, at Christ's word, casts his nets once more after an entire night of fruitless labor. In order that the parable expressed here not remain a mere memory, it is up to each of us, in our own situation, in our community, to be a parable of life for others."*

## A life centered on the Risen Christ

The "paschal commitment" stood at the center of the meetings in Taizé this summer. Build up hope in places where it is vanishing in your own life-situation, in your occupation or profession — develop a life-style in solidarity with people of other continents — base your existence on the Risen Christ — these were some of the directions taken each week by those choosing one of the possible forms of meeting : the "research-districts".

Each of these research-districts was made up of twenty persons, and involved three different stages. During the first stage, each participant was asked to introduce himself to the group in terms of the paschal commitment : what are my hopes and my disappointments in the situation in which I live ? These presentations grew out of a day spent in silence. The second stage consisted of a Bible study, to bring us back to the freshness and the radical nature of Christ's call : a time of contemplation, of looking not at oneself but at Christ. The third stage enabled the participants to go more deeply into the paschal commitment, which seemed to many to express in words their deepest yearnings.

The following texts are the introductory presentations of two persons, as they were expressed after a day spent in solitary reflection.

I come from a family of five children. I never was really able to talk to my parents before this past year. Before that I said to myself, "They have other ideas ; no point in trying." But now we have begun to speak and little by little we are realizing that we have one thing in common : living for Christ and the Gospel. At times the dialogue is difficult, because I feel inhibited by my father when he bases his arguments on his many years of experience. Sometimes I write them to prepare them for a new time of talking, and then we try to come closer together. A hole has been made in the wall.

Since I was eighteen years old I have been spending a lot of time in coffee-houses where I work, living among kids trying to find freedom in drugs, or in alcohol, or in a motorcycle, or again in extremist political activity, whether left- or right-wing.

A friend of mine committed suicide in a cemetery. His opinions on society were exactly the same as mine. For a long time I hesitated : is suicide the answer ? I saw his mother in tears. I gathered up my forces and I decided to go in the other direction — searching for a joy to melt the world's stiffness, living life to the full, finding the strength to live with a child's simplicity and an old man's wisdom and depth.

Children are a source of hope for me. At first I wanted to teach, because seeing children at play or absorbed in an activity filled me with a deep and lasting joy. But then there were my friends, or other acquaintances — sad, disappointed, drunk, depressed. How could they find the hope to continue living ? On account of them I finally decided to become a social worker, hoping to change part of what I saw around me. I also helped to create an information center for youth, to help them better to find their way.

I wanted to live in community, and so I rented an apartment where I was joined by three others. We tried to put together all that we owned ; some of us were students, others unemployed. We opened our home to those looking for human contact.

I have just finished a week of silence at Taizé. It allowed me really to pray, to discover Christ alive in my life and in the lives of those around me. Slowly I am realizing that my commitment finds its strength in Christ, in contemplating him.

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*My early childhood was imbued with God's presence. My father was a clergyman. He often spoke to us of God ; he would always tell us that we had to love God above all else. From childhood on my sisters and I were marked by the mystery of prayer, but we also felt a kind of frustration : we were afraid that our father loved God more than us ; sometimes we thought of Abraham and the sacrifice he was almost required to make of his son, and we shivered with fright.*

*This ambivalence with respect to God has still not entirely left me. I cannot get away from the thought that God might require of me things that are beyond my powers ; it keeps returning to my mind and to my heart. But I have also retained from the very first years of my life a thirst for God, a growing thirst which is never quenched. I was about fourteen years old when the desire for God finally won out over my fear.*

*When I was introduced to my husband, I was happy to learn that he was a theology student. He wouldn't keep me from living for Christ ; he would help me, sharing this passion with me. With him I have discovered the happiness of sharing deeply what the other has grasped of Christ, enriching in this way one another's faith. I consider love between two people a reflection of the love of Christ.*

*By celebrating and singing the Resurrection I learned o know what grace is. It was not an easy thing to grasp, ecause of the rather stern image I had of God. I discovered od's tenderness. For me that was a real turning-point. I hen began slowly to understand that I could accept my- elf. If God looks at men with a look which is transfigured, hen I too can look at my weaknesses and my limits with nore compassionate eyes, and regard those around me vith love.*

*A few months ago, in addition to the two children we ad adopted, we received an infant who had been abandon- d by its parents. We do not know if we can keep the child. t is possible that one day we may be able to adopt her, but t is likewise possible that she will be taken away from s — her parents are unable to make up their minds. This as not been easy for us. The temptation to form a posses- ive attachment to the infant is great. Each time I want o keep her for myself, each time I want to love by not etting go of the object of my love, everything goes wrong. am quite anxious at the thought of losing that little girl. When I am able to love her joyously and simply, for the ole reason that she is there and in need of my love, then verything is all right ; we are both happy. It is an image f what God asks of us : to forget ourselves in loving thers, expecting nothing in return.*

LES PRESSES DE TAIZÉ
D.R.A. Communauté de Taizé — Com. parit. N° 50798 — D.L. N° 452 — 4e tr. 1976

# The next international meetings at Taizé

*Dates :* — every week, from Monday evening to the following Sunday afternoon

— every weekend, from Saturday afternoon to Sunday afternoon ;

— CHRISTMAS and EPIPHANY : a number of meetings will be held from December 18 until January 9 ;

— a meeting meant for people between 15 and 17 years of age will take place February 12-13.

*Costs :* Everyone contributes as they can ; reckon with a basic cost (food and all) of between 12 and 18 francs per day.

*Lodging :* in heated sheds (bring sleeping bag, blankets).

*SILENCE AND SOLITUDE :* All during the winter months, at any time young people can come and spend a few days of silence, prayer, and personal reflection, in places set up for this purpose away from the others.

Registration to be sent to : MEETINGS, 71460 - Taizé-Community, France.

Name :

First Name :

Address :

(with zip-code and country)

Occupation : ..... Age : ....

Will take part in the meeting from ..... to .....

Can be part of reflexion-groups in italian — german — french — english — spanish — portuguese — dutch — swedish.

Can undertake simultaneous translation from ..... into .....

Need .... more registration forms / Information material.